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TO USLO PEKING

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SCUL, CH

SUBJECT: CHINESE ARCHEOLOGICAL SHOW: KANSAS CITY SHOWING

REF: PEKING 418

1. MUSEUM TRUSTEES DECIDED TO REJECT PRCLO DEMAND THAT NELSON GALLERY CLOSE PERMANENT CHINESE COLLECTION FOR DURATION OF ARCHEOLOGICAL EXHIBITION. GALLERY INFORMED PRCLO OF REJECTION MARCH 13. IN ATTEMPT TO PROVIDE PRC WITH FACE-SAVERS, MUSEUM AT SAME TIME TOLD PRCLO COUNSELOR HSIEH CHI-MEI THAT IT WOULD BE WILLING TO CANCEL SCHEDULED TOURS OF ITS COLLECTION AND TO REMOVE CERTAIN OBJECTS IN ITS PERMANENT COLLECTION WHICH MIGHT BE COMPARED WITH SIMILAR OBJECTS IN EXHIBITION. HSIEH'S INITIAL RESPONSE WAS THAT HE WOULD TAKE MATTER UNDER ADVISEMENT AND CONSULT HIS ASSOCIATES. TO DATE, PRCLO HAS NOT RESPONDED TO MUSEUM'S REJECTION.

2. IN USUAL FASHION HSIEH ALSO MAKING OTHER DEMANDS OF MUSEUM PRINCIPALLY CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM IN CONNECTION WITH EXHIBITION. MUSEUM TRYING TO ACCOMMODATE CHINESE BY NOT SCHEDULING SEMINARS OR LECTURES WITHIN
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MUSEUM, BUT OBVIOUSLY HAS LITTLE CONTROL OVER PROGRAMS

OUTSIDE.

3. DEPARTMENT AGREES THAT CHINESE DO THEIR HOMEWORK WELL WHEN RAISING TROUBLESOME ISSUES (REFTEL), BUT IN PRESENT PRC EFFORT TO CLOSE DOWN NELSON GALLERY'S PERMANENT CHINESE COLLECTION, WE FIND LITTLE SUPPORT FOR HYPOTHESIS THAT NELSON COLLECTION IS UNIQUELY OFFENSIVE TO PRC.

4. TWO ASPECTS OF NELSON GALLERY SHOWING CONCEIVABLY COULD HAVE STIMULATED PRC DEMAND:

A. PRC COULD BE UPSET BY NELSON GALLERY POSSESSION OF PIN-YANG RELIEF, SALVAGED BY NELSON DIRECTOR SICKMAN FROM COMMERCIAL ART GALLERIES IN PEKING PRIOR TO ESTABLISHMENT OF PRC IN 1949. RELIEF IS ESPECIALLY ATTRACTIVE AND HAS LEFT UNSIGHTLY AND HIGHLY VISIBLE VACANCY IN LUNG-MEN GROTTOES. INDICATIONS OF CHINESE INTEREST IN PIECE HAVE BEEN OBSERVED BY VISITING US DELEGATIONS TO PRC.

HOWEVER, DUE TO CONSTRUCTION OF NEW WING IN NELSON GALLERY, CAVE RELIEF WILL BE COVERED FOR PROTECTION AND NOT ACCESSIBLE TO PUBLIC UNTIL AUTUMN 1975. PRC HAVE BEEN INFORMED OF THIS, BUT IN ANY CASE HAVE NOT FOCUSED COMPLAINTS ON ANY PARTICULAR PIECE; PRC IMPLIES ENTIRE COLLECTION IS CONSIDERED PROPERTY OF PEOPLE OF CHINA AND WOULD BE EMBARRASSING TO CHINESE CURATORS TRAVELING WITH EXHIBIT. HISTORY OF ACQUISITION OF THIS PIECE AND INDEED OF MAJORITY OF QUALITY CHINESE ART OBJECTS IN ANY US MUSEUM COULD HAVE BEEN USED BY CHINESE TO RAISE SAME PROTEST.

B. HIGH QUALITY OF NELSON COLLECTION MIGHT EVOKE COMMENTS BY PRC, BUT OTHER HOST MUSEUMS FOR CHINESE EXHIBITION, E.G. TORONTO, HAVE HAD IMPORTANT COLLECTIONS WHICH TO OUR KNOWLEDGE STIMULATED NO SUCH CLAIMS FROM CHINESE.

5. IN SUM, FROM EVIDENCE WE CAN GATHER IT DOES NOT APPEAR THAT NELSON COLLECTION UNIQUELY OFFENSIVE TO CHINESE. EXPERIENCE WITH EXHIBITION TO DATE IS THAT CHINESE DEMANDS INCREASE IN QUALITY AND QUANTITY AT EACH SUCCESSIVE SITE. CONFIDENTIAL

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WE VIEW LATEST DEMAND IN THAT CONTEXT. TIMING OF DEMAND CHARACTERISTICALLY MADE AT LATE DATE, WHEN MUSEUM MOST VULNERABLE. PRC LO OFFICIALS VISITED NELSON MUSEUM IN LATE OCTOBER AND DELEGATION WHICH ATTENDED WASHINGTON OPENING SPENT DAY AT KANSAS CITY MUSEUM IN DECEMBER AND NEITHER RAISED NEGATIVE POINTS ON MUSEUM'S COLLECTION. WE, THEREFORE, HOPE THAT PRC WILL NOT PUSH DEMAND AND WILL ACCEPT ACCOMODATING APPROACH OFFERED BY MUSEUM. KISSINGER

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